

May 11 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1993

president of the Colorado Education Association; former Peace Corps volunteer
Carla Nuxoll, Washington, President of the Washington Education Association; chair of the board of PULSE

James Shimoura, Michigan, former special assistant attorney general for the State of Michigan; shareholder in the law firm of Kemp, Klein, Umphrey, and Edelman

Eddie L. Smith, Jr., Mississippi, former high school teacher; Mayor of Holly Springs, MS
Dawn Steel, California, president of Columbia Pictures from 1987 to 1990, the first woman to head a major motion picture studio

Niara Sudarkasa, Pennsylvania, president of Lincoln University in Chester County, PA;

previously the associate vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan, where she was the first African-American woman to receive tenure

Nancy Verderber, Missouri, administrative liaison for disability-related issues for the St. Louis County School Districts; member of the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Greater St. Louis

Margaret M. Whillock, Arkansas, executive vice president of the Baptist Medical Systems Foundation in Little Rock; director of development at the University of Arkansas

Tracey Bailey, Florida, National Teacher of the Year

Nomination for Posts at the Interior and Transportation Departments

May 11, 1993

The President named a total of four officials at the Departments of Transportation and the Interior today. He expressed his intention to nominate Frank Kruesi to be Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Transportation Policy and Ada Deer to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. The President also approved the appointment of Richard Mintz to be the Director of Transportation's Office of Public Affairs, and Patricia Beneke to be Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources at Interior.

"I am gratified that these individuals will be joining me in Washington," said the President. "Frank Kruesi has been an innovative and successful policy adviser to Mayor Daley. Ada Deer has been a powerful and eloquent voice for changing national Indian policy. Both will be valuable parts of this administration, as will Richard Mintz and Patricia Beneke."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Interview With Don Imus of WFAN Radio, New York City

May 12, 1993

Mr. Imus. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning. How are you?

Mr. Imus. I'm fine. How are you?

The President. I'm all right.

The First 100 Days

Mr. Imus. Let me ask you something. What the hell is going on down there in that White House? What do you mean, you've lost your focus? [Laughter]

The President. I haven't lost my focus. You've just been seeing me through the foggy lens of television instead of the direct one of radio. [Laughter] There's a big headline in the Washington Post today, "Clinton Wins Third Major Victory In Congress." I think we're doing fine. You know, we lost one bill, and a lot of people think it's like the last days of Pompeii. I mean, if you're going to fight for change, you've got to be prepared to lose a few as well as win some. But I think we're well on track.

Let me just point out that when the Congress adopted my budget outline, it was the first time in 17 years that they'd adopted it within the legal time limit, faster than they've moved in 17 years. Everybody complained about the appointments process. When 100 days went by, it turned out I'd made more appointments during the period than my two predecessors did. We just passed the motor voter bill yesterday, a big issue for younger voters, making it easier for them to register to vote. We've got the economic program on track. I feel good about the way things are. But you know, change is not easy and people—if you want to keep score after 100 days, where we had 4,500 days of trickle-down economics, you know, I haven't done everything I meant to do in 100 days, but I never promised to do it in 100 days. I think we're doing fine.

Mr. Imus. I think that looked good last night, breaking that Republican filibuster, because it looks like Bob Dole—it's like the "Friday the 13th" movies, you know, where you think you've finished him off and then next thing you know that hand comes popping up out of the lake there and, of course, in this case there was a pen in it. [Laughter] But this is an indication that it doesn't look like the Republicans are going to be able to waylay everything you're trying to do, does it?

The President. Well, I don't think so. You know, the filibuster on the jobs bill was an unusual thing, I think, not that they tried to do it but that they never let the majority vote. And I think the American people have got that figured out. And there are always going to be Republicans, or most always, that agree with some aspect of what we're doing. And when you reach out to them and you try to work out compromises, there are, almost always, there are some who want to go for the national interest over the partisanship, and that's what happened here. We worked out some problems with that motor voter bill, and it rolled right through. The same thing with family and medical leave. So I think if we just keep working at it, we'll have some success.

We've had 12 cloture votes—that's the attempt to get 60 percent of the Senate just so a majority can vote their will—12 already in the first 3½ months. So I imagine they'll make us do this a lot, but I think there are always going to be some Republicans who want to be part of a bipartisan movement for change, and I'm encouraged by it.

Mr. Imus. Or Republicans who want to be President.

The President. There are always going to be people who want to be President, and some days I like to give it to them. But if I did that, at least I'd have a telephone conversation with you before I give it up so you can call me President Bubba. [Laughter] See, I've been waiting for this all this time.

The Economy

Mr. Imus. Well, Mr. President, I don't know what you've heard about what's been going on in this program, but it's always been very respectful. And anything you've heard to the contrary would just be further evidence of the collapse of the intelligence community in this country. [Laughter] And I mean, these guys didn't even know that the Berlin Wall went down until they saw it on CNN. So you can't trust what you hear from them.

I was talking to my friend Jeff Greenfield over at ABC, and he had a good observation. He said, is this economic program of yours tougher to sell now, you think, because for whatever circumstances you weren't able to run on it?

The President. No, I don't think so. The difference in the program that we're advocating and the one I ran on over a 5-year period is not very great, but what happened was after the election—I want to emphasize this—after the election the Government came out—the previous administration—and said that the deficit was going to be \$50 billion a year bigger than they had said before in 3 of the 4 years of the term that I now occupy. So I had to do more to cut the deficit, and we had to put that up front. And it's worked pretty well so far.

You know, ever since we announced serious intentions to cut the deficit and were specific about it, interest rates began dropping very steeply, mortgage rates were at a 20 year low. You're going to have a \$100 billion—that's a lot of money—in refinancing of home mortgages and business debt and other things which I think will really help the economy.

But that meant we had to put off some of the plans or scale them back in the early going and put them back into the later years of my term to invest money in things that I think are also important. But we've got to get control

of this deficit. It's been spinning out of control now, getting worse and worse for a dozen years, and we don't have the funds we need to invest in jobs to grow the economy, and I think it's very important.

Mr. Imus. I think William Greider pointed it out in Rolling Stone—and you either agree with it obviously or don't—that during the campaign that the focus was on and the debate was on jobs. And it seemed that because of Bush “cooking the books” and not realizing that the deficit was going to be a little bit bigger than it was, that then the agenda switched to this 5-year plan to reduce the deficit. Let me ask you—

The President. But wait, let me make one point. I think they're two sides of the same thing. That is, if I didn't think that reducing the deficit over the long run would help us to create more jobs and if I didn't think we could also get some increased investment in new technologies and education and training and to rebuild our cities and to do these things that have to be done, I wouldn't be doing this.

I think they're two sides of the same coin. I think until we show we can get control over the Government's budget and we can make some spending cuts, as well as restore some of the tax loses that we had in the early years of the trickle-down revolution, I don't think we can get a job program going in the country. So I think this getting the deficit down is part of a long-term job growth strategy. Jobs are the issue; reducing the deficit is a means to get control of our economic future. The whole purpose of it is to put people to work.

Mr. Imus. To talk about it just a second, this economic plan and some of these numbers that we see now suggest that the public is—about half, 50 percent of them don't think it's going to work. And let me tell you what filters down to people like me, you know, aside from the esoteric proposals and figures and stuff that many of us don't understand, but what we hear is that the numbers we hear is that, for every \$3 and so in new taxes, we're looking at about a dollar or so in spending cuts. And there are some people that think the ratio's even higher than that. Is that accurate?

The President. No, no. But I'll tell you, if you look at this thing over a 5-year period we have more spending cuts than we do tax increases. And that's true even though we have some targeted increases in investment, in edu-

cation and training, and new technologies. Now, the people who argue this the other way, they play clever games. For example, if you're going to cut a program that's in place, you may have to phase in the cuts over a 5-year period; if you raise a tax, you can raise a tax immediately. You've got to look at this whole budget.

In this budget we have more spending cuts than tax increases. We do have some spending increases, but if you don't believe that there are differences in different kinds of spending, I don't know what we can do. We have some spending increases to give a nationwide apprenticeship program to help retrain the work force. We have some spending increases to get into new technologies to make up for defense cuts because we're losing a lot of high-tech, high-wage jobs.

You know, up in Connecticut we've had a lot of employment dislocation because of defense cutbacks, but you've got a whole high-wage work force that needs to have something else to do. And every other government in the world is investing in new technologies to try to create those jobs for their people. If we don't do it, we're going to be left behind. So we have to target some investments. But this budget has over 200 very specific budget cuts over the last budget adopted in the previous administration. And if you look—it's 5-year budget, that's what the law requires us to do, to adopt 5-year budgets—we've got more spending cuts than tax increases, and we should.

Mr. Imus. Is it important what the ratio is? And if it is, what should it be, do you think? I mean, because that's the—you know, that's kind of the way we relate to it.

The President. Well, the issue is how many cuts can you get without pulling the economy into a recession. What do you have to cut, how many cuts can you get without unfairly cutting the elderly? The same people who say we don't have enough cuts are also often saying we shouldn't cut what we're cutting. And the truth is, if you want to get to a balanced budget through spending reductions, the only way to do it now is to get control of health care costs, and that, basically, in the later part of this decade, if we can adopt a national health system and—you know, Hillary has been working on that with hundreds of others—and we can bring the Government's deficit down to zero, but you can't do that overnight. And the biggest part of our deficit growth now is in health care costs

and interest on the debt.

We're not spending a bigger percentage of our income on Social Security—our national income—than we were 10 years ago. We're spending a smaller percentage of our income on Federal aid in education than we were 10, 12 years ago. What's happened now is we started cutting defense, but health care increases overcame the defense cuts. So what I'm trying to do is to cut everything I can now, get health care costs under control and look toward not only cutting the deficit but bringing it down to zero over a multi-year period. You just can't do this overnight.

You know, we took the national debt from \$1 trillion to \$4 trillion in 12 years with a \$300-plus billion a year deficit when I took office. You can't just eliminate that overnight without having serious economic dislocations. You've got to do it in a disciplined way and take it down.

Mr. Imus. There's already been some compromise with some members of your own party in Congress. Do you anticipate any more of that, or is it—

The President. Well, I think there have been some changes that make it better. After all, we put this plan on the table only 30 days after I had taken office, and I invited people to comment on it but to keep its essential features intact. That is, we had to have the spending cuts before I would agree to tax increases. The tax increases had to be largely progressive; that is, they ought to be on people at higher income levels whose tax rates went down in the 1980's while their incomes went up, that we ought to have a earned-income tax credit. That's taxpayer jargon for giving a tax break to working class people with children, particularly who would be especially hard hit by the energy tax, and that affects people with incomes up to about \$29,000 a year, where they'll get an offset on their income tax to make up for the energy tax. And there ought to be some incentives for investment in the American economy, either mine or some others. And we emphasize small business, and we emphasize new plant and equipment for big business. And those things are all going to be in the ultimate tax package. So I feel good about it. I think that, you know, the changes that are being made basically, at least so far the ones that have been discussed with me, don't in any way undermine the fundamental principles of the tax program and the spending cut program I laid out.

Bosnia

Mr. Imus. There is a dramatic picture of you and an agonizing Lyndon Johnson on the cover of the current issue of Time magazine asking the question if Bosnia is going to be your Vietnam. One, let me ask you, do you think it has that potential? And two, what is the United States policy in Bosnia?

The President. Well, let me answer the first question. There are similarities to Vietnam in the sense that there is a civil war and there is a national dividing line, that is, between Bosnia and Serbia, which doesn't fully coincide with the ethnic cohesion of the Serbs in Bosnia and Serbia; same thing on the other end of the country with Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It's a very complicated thing. Those folks have been fighting with each other for a long time.

There are also some differences, however. You have the continuation of a principle of ethnic cleansing that you didn't have in Vietnam, people getting killed or raped just because of their religion, just because they're Muslims and because of their historic conflict in that area. And you have a United Nations resolution which has, in effect, given a military victory to the Serbians. That is, the U.N. imposed an arms embargo which had the effect of opening up for the Serbs the entire arms cache of the Yugoslav Army and denying weapons to the Bosnian Muslims and to a lesser extent, the Croats. So the international community has been involved. The third and the big difference from the point of view of the average American is, I've made it very clear that the United States, unlike Vietnam, is not about to act alone. It should not act alone. This is a European issue. It's an issue for the world community to address.

We have worked very carefully with our allies to make the sanctions tougher and to keep the pressure on to try to do two things: to try to contain the conflict and to try to put an end to the slaughter. And our policy is that it is in the United States national interest to keep this conflict from spilling over into a lot of other countries which could drag the United States into something with NATO that we don't want and to do everything we can with our allies to stop the slaughter and to end the fighting. And that's our policy. Our policy is not to do what we did in Vietnam, which was to get in and fight with one side in a civil war to assure

a military victory. That is not what we're involved in. We are trying to promote a settlement, and we have signed on to a plan—two of the three political factions in that area have signed on to it, and we have committed ourselves to working with our allies. So the policy is very, very different than the policy the United States pursued in Vietnam.

Mr. Imus. Any scenario, anyplace down the road—this may be a dumb question, but I ask a few—that you see ground troops somehow getting involved there? Does it ever reach that point? Say all the allies get on board and—

The President. We believe that there could be a United Nations force which we could take part in that could help to enforce the peace agreement or keep the peace. We've been involved in peacekeeping operations of this kind in many places. But the United States is not going to unilaterally enter the conflict on the side of one of the combatants and do what we did in Vietnam. That is not our policy, and that's not what we're going to do.

Mr. Imus. You know, I agreed with you when you said during the campaign that history has shown that you can't allow the mass extermination of people and just sit by and watch it happen, and that really is driving this, isn't it?

The President. Yes. It is a difficult issue. Let me say that when we have people here who've been involved in many previous administrations that are involved in national security including, obviously, a lot of people who were involved in the two previous ones—everybody I talk to believes that this is the toughest foreign policy problem our country has faced in a long time. And I'm trying to proceed in a very deliberate way to try to make sure there isn't a Vietnam problem here. But also to try to make sure that the United States keeps pushing to save lives and to confine the conflict. I don't think we can just turn away from this. Just because we don't want to make the mistake we did in Vietnam doesn't mean we shouldn't be doing anything. There are things that we can do, and we're trying to do more to try to push this thing toward a settlement.

I also think that in terms of our clear self-interest, in addition to the humanitarian issue, if we can stop this conflict from spreading, and it has powder-keg potential, that that is clearly in our interest.

Media Criticism and President's Agenda

Mr. Imus. You know what I've always wondered, Mr. President, you read the editorials in the Washington Post, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal and you read these op-ed pieces—do you ever read one of those and then call Al and say, "Man, that's a good idea. Why don't we do that?"

The President. Often. [Laughter] Actually, I do.

Mr. Imus. Do you?

The President. Absolutely, I do. I also often read editorials that question our policies or op-ed pieces that question our policy, and I send it to the Vice President and to other people in the administration, and I say, "If we don't have an answer to this we shouldn't go on. This is the best case against our policy. What's our answer to it?" I think that's important.

You know I don't mind, frankly, I don't mind criticism. In fact, I welcome it when it's rooted in ideas, when people are questioning whether a policy is right or wrong. But what I try to do is to have a new spirit of possibility here. I want a sense that, you know, we stop all this sort of political give-and-take and real harsh partisanship and calculating personal advantage and just talk about the ideas and the issues at stake and try to keep our focus on what's best for the American people. We're really in a new and uncharted time in many ways. It's very exciting. There are all kinds of economic opportunities out there for the United States, but there are also a lot of very, very stiff challenges that we have to meet. And I think in order to do the right thing, we're going to have to keep our minds open and our ears open and be willing to experiment and to try some things until we find a course that will clearly work, that helps to support the security of the American people.

Mr. Imus. You know, I was talking at the beginning of our conversation, Mr. President—I was actually just kidding about this focus issue—but you know, what looked great was when you and Hillary went up to Capitol Hill and when you had that first town meeting in Michigan, and now you are—in Cleveland and Chicago and this telephone call. You know, it began to look for a time—I remember I was watching Willie Nelson and Neil Young out there at Farm Aid, and they were talking about you and Al Gore, and they said, "What change?"

And I think, you know, from the outside looking in, it's like we had 8 years of watching old Reagan get on and off that helicopter, and we wanted to see you do stuff like this. And I think this is great, and I can't tell you how much I appreciate you calling.

But I would say this: Let's not wait until these approval ratings get down to single digits before you call me again, because—

The President. Let me tell you, one of the things I did, though, and you may think this is a mistake, but I mean—put yourself in my position. Partly, when I get out of focus with the people is when I'm not communicating directly with them, when I'm just answering other people's questions, and I'm at the mercy of whatever is on the evening news.

But I came to this city with a determination to work with the Congress and to try to get some things done. In the first 3 months, I thought that, having been out across the country for the last year and a half, I should spend a great deal of time in intense efforts to develop the economic package, a health care package, and to get the basis of our national security and foreign policy down so that I would have a framework to proceed in. Most of the time I've been here, I've spent on the economy and on health care. In other words, my time has been sharply focused. I don't think the American people know that because I haven't been out here talking to you and people like you out there.

But there's been a big difference between the way I've spent my time in the efforts of the administration and, I think, what the perception is. That's my fault, in a way, and I'm going to get out and correct it. But I had to spend a couple of months, I think, just going to work in the office, getting the details down, working through the procedures, making sure I understood how the thing worked. And now I can go back on the road and do the things that I think are important to connect the American people to their Government. And I recognize that that's my responsibility. Only the President can do that, and if I don't do it, it won't be done.

Sports and Physical Fitness

Mr. Imus. I know, Mr. President, you're coming to New York this afternoon. Do you want to go to the Knicks game tonight, or—[laughter]—

The President. You're betraying you're all-sports radio. I know you're trying to convince your listeners that you know something about this. You're trying to get your approval ratings up on sports. I know that.

Actually, I'd like to do it. But I'm going to speak at the Cooper Union this afternoon. And then I'm going to a Democratic Party event tonight. So I can't go to the ballgame, although I'd like to. I'm a big baseball fan, as you know.

Mr. Imus. Well, of course, this would be basketball, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, did you say Knicks? I thought you said Mets.

Mr. Imus. No, nobody wants to see the Mets.

The President. Are you kidding? Let me tell you something. My wife grew up in Chicago as a Cubs fan. Once you get for a baseball team, you can't quit it just because it doesn't win.

Mr. Imus. Well—

The President. I thought you said Mets. No, I'd love to go to the Knicks game, but I'm otherwise occupied. I watched two of those games last night on television. Do you think the American people would think less of me if they thought I stayed up late and watched basketball?

Mr. Imus. No, I don't think that; in fact, I read you've been watching the Houston Rockets and the Clippers.

You know, I'll let you go here. Just one final observation that I thought was kind of funny. Did you see any clips of Strom Thurmond interviewing one of those gay sailors? Here he is—I don't know if you saw this or not, but he was saying, "Have you seen a psychiatrist?"—[laughter]—and I thought, man, if I could be 90 years old and have it that together, there really isn't any other goal. Let's hope the same happens for you, Mr. President.

The President. Since we're on an all-sports network, let me give Senator Thurmond a plug. He still works out for 50 minutes a day, and that's why he's still out there doing it. So if everybody listening to us will start spending 50 minutes a day taking care of themselves, a lot of them will be 90, 91 and still plugging away like Strom.

Mr. Imus. May I ask you a question about your jogging?

The President. Sure.

Mr. Imus. What are your mile splits? We have an estimate here that's right around 12 minutes.

The President. No. When I ran with the Boston Marathon runners, we ran a 5k, and this is allergy time for me so I have to start out slow. We ran the first mile in 9 minutes, the second mile in 8 minutes, and the third mile in 7 minutes.

Mr. Imus. Man, that's a lot faster than I do it.

The President. When I run here in town, I average probably about an 8.5 minute mile. But I can run it faster. On Valentine's Day the Vice

President and I did 2.5 miles in a Heart Association run at about 7.5 minutes a mile.

Mr. Imus. That's terrific. Mr. President, thank you very much. Thanks for coming on, and good luck.

The President. Thanks. Talk to you again, I hope.

NOTE: The telephone interview began at 7:38 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Swearing-In of Small Business Administrator Erskine Bowles and Presentation of the Small Business Person of the Year Award May 12, 1993

Please sit down, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning. It's great to see all of you here in the Rose Garden. I want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us for this ceremony, and welcome all of you small business people and your families from all across America here to the White House for this important day.

This is an extra special day to celebrate the winners of the small business people of the year awards, because today we're also going to have the oath of office for the new Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Erskine Bowles. I chose Erskine for a very simple reason, because he's a business person and not a politician.

Too often in the past, the SBA has been the province of politics too much and business too little. This man has devoted his life to helping people start businesses, to helping them grow their businesses, to helping them reach out beyond the borders of their communities, to State and regional and national and international markets. He really understands what it's like to start and to keep going a business enterprise. His plans for the Agency include a plan to improve the management and outreach to determine what we can do to actually create more success stories in the small business community.

He's already met, I know, with many of you who are here for this celebration. But that's just the beginning. I think you will see the most energetic, connected, and continuous effort to reach out to small business that the SBA has ever given to the American small business community.

Now, I'd like to introduce Erskine and Judge James Dixon Phillips, Jr., of the Court of Appeals of the 4th Circuit in Durham, North Carolina, who will administer the oath of office. Erskine's wife, Crandall Bowles, will hold the Bible, and then they will take it over from there. Judge?

[At this point, Judge Phillips administered the oath of office. Mr. Bowles then expressed his gratitude to the President and enumerated his priorities for SBA.]

Thank you very much. I predict that over the next 4 years, small business men and women in every State in America will come to see Erskine Bowles as the best advocate they ever had. And I assure you that he is going to have a real influence on our economic policy.

Some evidence of that is the presence here today of the two other Members of my Cabinet, Ron Brown, the Secretary of Commerce, and Mickey Kantor, our U.S. Trade Representative. We are going to have a coordinated policy for small business. We have to have the Commerce Department, we have to have the Trade Office, we have to have the Treasury Department if we're going to attack all these issues. And I'm very, very proud of the team that we've got working on it.

Let me just mention one or two other things about the small business economy. We have spent most of our time in the last 3 months or so in meetings in this White House talking about the economy and talking about health care